

TESTIMONY TO CALIFORNIA PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMISSION
September 9, 2004, Los Angeles, CA

Esteemed colleagues and honored Commission members:

I am addressing you here today representing the Association for Extended Opportunity Programs and Services in California Community Colleges. The Association represents 109 community college unique programs that serve the needs of historically disadvantaged students – both educationally and economically. These disenfranchised students come from all segments of our society, but often are the underrepresented, under prepared, single parents, poverty students of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Today I would like to address the issue that has been proposed that California's community colleges be subsumed within the umbrella of the Secretary of Education in California and expanded with the K-12 educational system in our State.

As this was presented to community colleges throughout the state, many of us were stunned, taken aback, and horrified. We have come a long way since the Master Plan for Education was signed in the 1960's, and without a question one of the most significant concepts that came from the Master Plan was recognizing that community colleges are, in fact, a legitimate and valid segment of *higher education* in California, and as such should break the then-existing "marriage" to K-12 education.

As the largest institution of higher education in the entire world, we are equal partners with other segments of public higher education (University of California and California State University), and we serve a unique mission to a hugely varied population. It would be more reasonable to establish a third institution of higher education, with equal stature and status, and with sufficient staffing and funding to meet the needs of this state in the 21st Century.

The EOPS Association supports the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the tremendous work that the staff accomplishes under limited funding and constant scrutiny. Further, it is integral to the success of the Chancellor's Office and integrity of the system that an independent citizens Board of Governors be maintained. Instead of such a proposal as has been presented in the CPR we would support increasing funding to adequate levels, increasing staffing to be appropriate for the level of legal compliance and review expected, and continue to support the outstanding work that is accomplished on the campuses of 109 community colleges.

Community colleges provide educational services to 2.8M students in California. 100,000 of these EOPS students are the most disadvantaged students in colleges. Our successful programs have served students over the past 35 years partly because of the support of the Chancellor's Office, in spite of fiscal limits, staffing cuts and other political and economic urgencies. We in EOPS support the Community Colleges' mission, the administration and staff that work diligently to provide the level of support and service necessary to maintain such an institution, and trust the Commission will reject any plan to demean this treasure of higher education.